

# Bonefish and Tarpon Photography Recommendations



Taking photographs of fish is important to our industry. Photographs promote fishing businesses and get anglers interested in the sport. But photographs increase air exposure and handling time, which increases catch and release mortality.

The Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association, Lower Keys Guides Association, and Bonefish & Tarpon Trust provide photography guidelines that ensure a great photo and a healthy release.

## FKFGA, LKGA, and Bonefish & Tarpon Trust photography guidelines:

### **While still at the dock, talk to your client or friend about a photograph plan. This will reduce handling time and make for a quicker release.**

It is helpful to share a video or a photograph with your clients or friends on how you want to take a photograph so they can be ready for that photograph position and angle.

- Consider a preferred photo angle at the dock. This will prevent clients or friends from holding the fish for too long while taking photographs of multiple angles of the fish.
- FKFGA, LKGA, and BTT suggest this photograph position below. The angler holds the fish over the water. If the fish flops out of the angler's hands, the fish will fall in the water.



While keeping the hook in the fish, use the leader to steady the fish's head. This both keeps angler's fingers from accidentally slipping into the fish's gills. And, using only one hand to hold the fish's belly also reduces slime removal.

In this photograph position, it is helpful to have a towel or pad ready to put on the deck to reduce strain on the anglers knees from kneeling on the deck.

- Encourage photos with the fish still in the water. A camera lens with a polarizing filter and proper sun angle can produce great photos of the angler holding a fish that is entirely submerged.
- Encourage photos of fish in the water using waterproof cameras. The angler won't be in the photo, but the images can be great. If photos are taken in the water, still do this quickly having fish on the leader.

### **Talk to clients or friends about the number of fish per species to photograph. And, avoid taking photographs of all fish caught.**

- To capture the experience of catching multiple fish, consider filming the angler fighting the fish, or videoing the fish in the water as it gets closer to the boat at the end of the fight. This avoids additional handling of more fish, while still documenting the catch. However, avoid increasing the fight duration to capture these photographs. Fighting fish to exhaustion greatly decreases their chances of survival.

### **When taking a photograph, minimize handling time, only keep bonefish out of the water for less than 10 seconds.**

- Prior to landing a fish, to reduce handling time, consider where the best sun angle is for a photograph. Make sure a camera is ready.
- If a client or friend wants to get in the water for a photo, have them remove valuables from their pocket when they are fishing, prior to hooking or landing a fish. Getting in the water does not mean you can take your time, be quick, get your photo and release them right away since any excess handling increases the chance of a shark eating the fish.

### **General proper handling for a photograph**

- Hold fish over the water NOT over the boat.
- Have fish out of the water for less than 10 seconds.
- Only use wet, gloveless hands, and wash sunscreen off your hands.
- For baby tarpon hold them horizontally, with one hand holding the lower jaw and the other hand. Supporting the belly while holding the fish over the water. Keep your handling time to less than 10 seconds, that is same as for bonefish.
- Large tarpon (more than 40") should never be removed from the water at all!